

## **BRING DOWN THE WALLS!**

Joshua 5: 13—6:20 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days.” – Hebrews 11:30

It's wonderful for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity. It's wonderful in the home, in marriages, in families, and in the family of God. Tonight, as we are met together, it's wonderful to worship in unity and now to see we are met in hope for a word from our Lord in His Word. The unity we enjoy in our church is the result of our unified faith. Yet, you all know how we tend to put up walls with each other that can become formidable and that separate us. When we have spiritual “walls of Jericho” in our personal lives, in our churches, in our homes, in our jobs, or in our marriages, we face mighty walls hindering us in our walk of faith. These walls are barriers to victory. God has promised us victory, but before His promised victory can come, these walls have to come down. It may seem perfectly simple how these walls of Jericho came down. The writer of Hebrews declares, “By faith...” That seems simple enough, but we all can start to analyze the scene. Before we know it, we begin debating with God. How do we ever learn to operate and function and walk by faith? Is tonight God's time to awaken our hearts on how to bring down the walls in our lives by faith? Joshua 5:13--6:20 explains God's strategy for using faith to bring down our walls. God gave Joshua four simple rules. If we discover these four rules that God used at Jericho, and by faith obey Him, it will bring down our walls. What are God's rules for bringing down our walls by faith? Rule # 1 --

### **REMEMBER: GOD'S WAY TO BRING DOWN OUR WALLS IS KNOWABLE—HE HAS A PLAN OF FAITH.**

Joshua 6:1,2 declares, “Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in. And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor.” There are spiritual “Jerichos” in all our lives. Some of us have faced walls and walled cities before us for years. Most of us have strong tendencies to come up with our own puny plans. We have our elder board meetings, our deacon meetings, our Sunday School board meetings, our family talks, and our talks as married couples. If we could hear ourselves, we often are saying, “Let's try this!” God says, “No, forget that, it won't work. I've got a better way.” Most of us who are present in those conversations have our own opinions. Yet, how many of us stop, pray, and listen to the Lord, His Word, His Spirit, His promptings, and His guidance?

God had a plan for taking ancient Jericho. God said, in essence, in Joshua 6:3-5a, “I want your soldiers, men of war, to lead marches around Jericho, followed by priests with ram’s horns continually blowing the trumpets, then the ark of God symbolizing His presence in the midst, then a rear guard of soldiers and then all the people. These daily marches are to go on for six days. Then on the seventh day, the plan is to march around the walls of Jericho seven times. Everyone is not to say a word or let a word proceed out of his mouth. Until,—this seventh day when the seven priests, carrying seven trumpets of rams’ horns blow one long blast on their trumpets together. Then Joshua, you give the signal to the people that this is and the moment to shout. When all the people shout, the walls will fall down flat.”

Now that was God’s perfect strategy—His plan. He could have used other methods, for He is almighty God. But God always has a perfect plan. **This wasn’t God’s time** for the enemy to come underneath the walls as when the Medo-Persian army took Babylon. God could have done it that way—but not this time. He had another plan. We must discover His way and His will, for our situation today, even if it seems hard or odd or strange or wrong to us. For God, our obstacles mean His opportunities. There is a second rule for bringing down the walls of our “Jerichos.” Rule # 2

**REMEMBER: GOD ONLY REVEALS HIS PLAN OF FAITH TO THOSE WHO LISTEN ON HOLY GROUND.** Did you know that every time you cease from your own ideas, when you really become quiet before the Lord and listen to His voice, that place is holy ground? That is where God reveals His plans to us. In Joshua 5: 13-15 is the key to how Joshua learned God’s plans. “When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so. Joshua was alone near Jericho when the Captain of Lord’s host stood in front of him with a drawn

sword. I believe this was an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. Joshua wanted to know if this armed captain was for him or against him. The Lord replied, “No, rather I indeed come now as Captain of the host of the Lord.” Joshua knew what to do. He fell on His face even as John on the isle of Patmos fell before the risen and ascended Lord. And what did Joshua do? He bowed before the Lord and asked, “What has my Lord to say to His servant? The Lord didn’t even answer Joshua’s question before he asked Joshua to take His shoes off because the very ground where Jesus stood was holy. Beloved, the place where God speaks to you as you meditate before Him—your bed, your bath, your car, your garden, your prayer closet, your chair at home or the pew in church—wherever the Lord speaks to you—that place is holy ground.

That means that when we sense the Holy Spirit is prompting us, it wouldn’t hurt us if it is possible, to take off our shoes. We will never know or understand God’s will until we listen and say with desire, “What has my Lord to say to His servant?” ‘Eight years ago, my 30 year old son, Aaron, then 22, arrived home at 2:46 AM on a Thursday morning on August 18<sup>th</sup> from working at Rockaway Beach in Oregon at the Pacific Ocean. When he got home, he jumped in bed with Jinny and with me. He couldn’t quit telling us how God had been speaking to him. It was such a blessing to hear my son rejoicing in God’s voice speaking to him. Aaron is my 5<sup>th</sup> child of seven, my eldest son. What was Aaron telling me his Mom and Dad? He was telling us that he had encountered the Captain of the host of the Lord in the summer of 2005. God had shown Aaron who his wife would be—Molly Bruner. That night, our bed and bedroom became holy ground. I already had my shoes off. When you ever hear that God has been speaking to your wife, to your husband or to your children or your friends or to your pastor, that’s holy ground. Take off your shoes. Listen quietly to what the voice of the Lord is saying. There is a third rule that will bring down the enemy walls:  
Rule # 3

**REMEMBER: DON’T TALK; JUST OBEY GOD’S PLAN IN FAITH!**

“Joshua commanded the people, (Joshua 6:10) “You shall not shout or make your voice heard, neither shall any word go out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout.” Can you imagine one and a half millions Israelites in complete silence before the Lord? Sounds impossible, doesn’t it? Yes, silence before God for even one of us is a rare commodity. That day, thousands of mental voices must have been battling for the last word in all the minds of the Israelites. But what did they do? They marched

without a word. Yet interestingly, they marched to the haunting sound of 7 distant ram's horns. Can you imagine how popular this plan was to the common Israelites? Do you think some of them had doubts? Do you think they may have debated in their hearts—did Joshua really meet with the Captain of the host of the Lord?" "What kind of a strategy is this?" And the soldiers on the Jericho walls--Imagine their jeers and taunts from the top—"Where you going, troops, to a picnic? What is this—"Ring around the rosey, pockets full of posies. Ashes, ashes, we all fall down" "Hey, you silent Hebrews, cat gotch your tongue?" "Is this parade what we've been trembling over for the last 40 years?" The people of Jericho must have baited the Israelites in every way to get them to break the silence of not talking for 7 days. Beloved, I guarantee you—following God's specific plans will often, at first, and maybe even at the last, make you feel foolish and stupid. Yet, sweet surrender to God's will in quiet, loving, compliant obedience to the word and way and will of God—His plan is something utterly powerful. When we obey, things begin to happen from that very day on. What happens? There are four ways that God brings down our walls.

**Walls fall down through a conquest of faith.** Hebrews 11:30 tells us that by faith the walls of Jericho fell down. All of our spiritual battles are to be fought and won by faith. **Walls fall down through an adventure of faith.** The Israelites had no fortresses to retreat to. They lived in tents, not houses. They were staking everything on the trustworthiness of God and of His word to their leader, Joshua. The Jordan River had been crossed; retreat was impossible. The Israelites were like pioneers going west—shut up to total trust in God. They could circle their wagons, but it was an adventure of faith.

**Walls fall down through an obedience of faith.** There must be no questioning of God, His leader, or whether God has spoken. God rarely, if ever, interprets his commands in advance before we obey and complete His assignments. When Peter protested letting Jesus wash his feet, Jesus said, "What I do, you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter. (John 13:7) God isn't after new methods today, but obedient servants. Theodore Epp once said it well, "When God says do a thing a certain way, let us do it. To the world, this is irrational, even unbelievable. The true believer knows there is no alternative to obedience. Christian obedience is not based on fore- knowledge or knowing why such and such a method is the best one to follow. We trust what God says and that is sufficient."

**Walls fall down through a discipline or training of faith.** The Jews were notorious for their complaining spirit and criticism of God's ways. 40 years they provoked God in the wilderness without any discipline of faith. This group of Israelites marching around Jericho, was a new generation. They grew up hearing their parents criticize and complain and counter God's ways until God silenced all their parents by death in the wilderness. What an order this was to have complete silence for seven days! Yet, imagine the confusion if everyone had been free to express his own views on the strategy of God. Criticism and doubt soon would have paralyzed their faith. They would have talked themselves out of God's plan before they made their first trip around the city. The secret in the discipline of faith is doing God's work God's way. Fourthly and lastly,

**REMEMBER: GOD'S WAYS OF FAITH ARE WISE AND BEST.**

Joshua 6:15-20 is worth reading closely. Listen! What do people need after they've been listening to the Lord? They need affirmation. They need people to rejoice and say—"God's ways are wise and best." What do parents need when they tell their teenagers God's will about a troubling issue? They need their children to rejoice and say, "God's ways are wise and best." But what usually happens when a pastor, an elder, a deacon, a Sunday School Superintendent, a husband, or a missionary says, "God has been showing me something."? There is often an anvil chorus of folk who say, "That's ridiculous. That's not how to do it." Often these people haven't spent time alone with God, open before Him. Their arguments can shoot holes in God's plan—dozens of logical holes. When the Lord led me some years ago to go to India, the South Seas and trips and Russia, I always had folks telling me, "You're crazy. You are a married man with 7 children. They'll kill you over there." That well could have happened, but I had no choice. God had revealed to me His will. He proved his ways were wise and best as multiplied hundreds received Jesus. God's ways are wise and best, even if it means my life.

You see God works often through leaders like Joshua, but His will involves us all. Sometimes folk come to us and say, "God really told you to do this? My, this is exciting what God is going to do." What a blessing those folk are! After the walls fell down, **all** the Israelites then dropped their doubts and questions. In retrospect, in hindsight, we can all see 20-20. But ahead of time, when the command is—"No talking, walk quietly, seven more days, after walking for 40 years. Walk around this walled city once a day for six days." How many Israelites in their inner hearts thought, "Joshua, you are

doing exactly what God told you is best—nothing could be wiser.”? Isn’t that the way all of are supposed to live, to obey the Lord and do what He tells us to do and leave the responsibility on Him to make His plan work?

God doesn’t demonstrate His plan by our superior military strategy or our superior thinking. Rather, His wisdom will only be demonstrated by tenacious obedience—a tenacious refusal to let go of God’s instructions. That is wisdom, even when it flies in the face of human logic, or in the face of our adamant disapproval. When Noah was to build an ark, the idea seemed hopelessly foolish because people had never seen rain. When Moses was told to speak to the rock, God had a reason. Couldn’t God work in other ways? Yes, He could. Moses proved that to be true as he lost his temper and smote the rock twice, ruining the symbolic picture that Jesus is the Rock and He would only be smitten once on the cross. Moses had smitten the rock before once and water came out of a dry rock. Now Moses disobeyed God and smote the rock twice. Water gushed from the rock. God publicly honored Moses’ leadership. But Moses would tell us with tears tonight, “God’s ways are wiser and best.” God worked His plan another way, but the result for Moses was, he died in the wilderness, within eyesight of the Promised Land. God buried Moses there, because Moses buried God’s best plan and did things his own way.

When people oppose the plan of God, it is usually because of what they are asked to do. Folk can accept what God wants us to do , as long as it doesn’t involve them. “Why do we have to walk for six days without talking? I don’t want to. It’s stupid. Who does Joshua think he is?” And then on the seventh day, can’t you hear their thoughts, “Why kill off the Israelites by seven trips around the city. It won’t kill the folk inside the walls, but us. I don’t want to do it.” Few people realize that we have the ark of God within us—we have God’s presence. It’s not our work that brings the walls down. God just means to let us share a part in the victory. God’s voice to Joshua was—“See, I have given Jericho into your hand.”

The One who has to destroy our walls is God and not us. He won’t do His part until we obey Him, and move out in simple obedience. If we agree—God’s ways are wise and best, victory is going to be ours before we know it. But since God is so kind and holy and loves us, even though it is His victory, He gives us a moment to shout—each of us gets those moments. When we obey, there comes the moment to shout. That’s when the walls fall down.

Yes, God's ways are strange at times. His ways are often conundrums—even humorous. Ask Abraham and Sarah. They laughed, both of them, at God's plan. At age 90 for Sarah and 100 for Abraham, little Isaac was born to them. Abraham called him Isaac—meaning “laughter.” When Sarah bore Isaac, she said, in Genesis 21:6, “God has made laughter for me: everyone who hears will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Tonight, what is your Jericho? Write it down. Make it a matter of prayer, whatever it is—a project, a strained relationship, an impossible situation with your relatives, or someone impossible for you to forgive. Are your walls a long disobeyed command of God? Tell God about your wall. Wait. Be silent. Simply do what God tells you to do. How long have you opposed God's will? God is so patient. When He speaks, He doesn't change His plans to match our doubts and fears and our outright opposition. No, persistently, He keeps to His plan. Move now. Acknowledge He has spoken. When He says move, move. Speak when he says to speak. Shout when He says shout. Follow Jesus and never run ahead or behind His ark, His presence. Time after time, a tremendous victory is just ahead. Look out for falling walls. Faith will bring down our walls. Bring down the walls. Let's pray! Amen.